

A Village Romeo and Juliet

A Music Drama in Six Scenes

BY

FREDERICK DELIUS

THE TEXT FOUNDED ON THE NOVEL OF
GOTTFRIED KELLER

EIGHTEENPENCE

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PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

MANZ	}	-	-	-	-	<i>Rich Farmers</i>
MARTI						
SALI	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Son of Manz</i>
VRENCHEN	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Daughter of Marti</i>
THE BLACK FIDDLER	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Right Heir to the Wildland</i>
FIRST PEASANT						
SECOND PEASANT						
FIRST PEASANT WOMAN						
SECOND PEASANT WOMAN						
THIRD PEASANT WOMAN						
GINGERBREAD WOMAN						
WHEEL-OF-FORTUNE WOMAN						
CHEAP JEWELLERY WOMAN						
SHOWMAN						
MERRY GO-ROUND MAN						
SHOOTING-GALLERY MAN						
THE SLIM GIRL						
THE WILD GIRL						
THE POOR HORN-PLAYER						
THE HUNCHBACKED BASS-FIDDLER						
FIRST BARGEMAN						
SECOND BARGEMAN						
THIRD BARGEMAN						
VAGABONDS, PEASANTS, AND BARGEMEN						

Place of Action : Seldwyla, Switzerland

Time : Middle of Nineteenth Century

Six years elapse between the First and Second Scenes.



The Prologue.

SCENE I.

Time : September.

A strip of land luxuriously upgrown on a hill, the broad fields of Manz and Marti lie either side, though only a small piece of either field is visible. To the right in the foreground some shady bushes, to the left a brook with a bridge over it. Manz is cleaning the blade of his plough.

MANZ :

(Somewhat in the distance, and approaching nearer and nearer.)

Pull strong, good plough, pull strong !
The morning's fresh, the morning's windy.
Pull strong, good stallion, pull strong !
The fragrant, rich, brown earth upturning
Till the furrow's straight and long.
Pull strong, good stallion, pull strong !
So that rich in the summer-time shall be the harvest.
Hold on, good plough, hold on !
Thy task is almost o'er :
Across the broad, broad fields again
We'll hie before the wind
Like scudding clouds ! Yuchei !

MARTI :

(Contemplating the wild-land.)

A shame it is
To let such good land lie waste.
The next turn I take
Another furrow I'll reclaim.
Is not the land unclaimed ?

MANZ :
(Jodling in the fields.)

Dui, dui, dui,
 Dui, dui, dui !

MARTI :
 I hear Manz there singing right merrily as he ploughs
 I'll wage, the rascal has done the same.

(Marti goes off ploughing.)

(Enter Sali and Vrenchen drawing a little green cart containing the mid-day meal of their fathers. They spread it out in the shade of the bushes.)

SALI :
 Come, Vrenchen, come !
 Let's go into the woods and play.

VRENCHEN :
 Yes, yes !

SALI :
 I'll slay the robber chief
 And free the fair princess.
 Hark ! I hear her call.
(Sali starts off, running towards the wood.)

VRENCHEN :
 O leave me not alone
 But take me by the hand,
 I fear to lose my way
 And meet the ogre man ;
 I fear the fierce wild beasts
 That linger in the wood.
(Sali returns and takes Vrenchen by the hand.)

SALI :
 Be not afraid, I'll slay them all !
(They run off hand in hand into the wildland. Enter Manz.)

MANZ :
 Another little strip
 From off this jungle land,
 Then mid-day meal I'll take.
 On, on, good stallion, on !
(Exit Manz ploughing.)
 Ho-hei ! Inchei !
(Marti approaches wiping his brow.)

MARTI :

The little ones are here,
Our mid day meal is spread.

(He goes near the woods and sits down in the shadow before taking his meal.)

Manz is still at work,
Here 'tis cool and shady !

MANZ :

(Approaching.)

Good-day, Marti !

MARTI :

Good-day, Manz !
A windy morning !
How clear and sunny !

MANZ :

Aye ! real working weather !

*(Manz sits down beside Marti. The children appear at the edge of the wood.
They seem to be listening to something.)*

VRENCHEN :

How strange the wind sounds sighing thro' the trees !
List, Sali ! may be 'tis fairy music !

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

(In the distance.)

O piper unfollowed, how thou flingest on
Thro' the tangle of trees and the wrangle of shrubs,
While I must limp after thy fiddler forsaken,
For are we not comrades, O vagabond wind ?

SALI :

A man comes singing up the road.

VRENCHEN :

What a strange dark man,
And how he limps along !
Come, we'll run towards him !

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

(Now quite near.)

O farmer unfettered, no husband's like thee !
This land that is mine to thy use I endowed.
Those alders thou plantedst, these thistles thy sowing,
Then are we not partners, O vagabond wind ?

(Enter the dark Fiddler playing his fiddle.)

MARTI :

Don't you know him ?
The trumpeter's grandson,
And heir to that land there.

MANZ :

Now 'tis to be sold,
'Tis judged without an heir.

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

(To the children.)

You, you may come, yet 'twere best I rebaptize you
To your markland home.
So long you hear the wind
Singing thro' the tangle
O not then have fear.
See, you shall play in and out my untilled garden
As you list all day,
But when has sped the all levelling plough
Across my acres, comes your dread.
Here lies my right,
But a wanderer and a bastard
Hurts a good man's sight ;
Wherefore full soon all these thick benested bushes
Must come tumbling down ;
The harmless wren, with the coney and the squirrel,
Dispossessed of men, shall cry to heaven in vain.

(Turning to the farmers.)

None knows when Father Time will make odd things even.

(The fiddler walks slowly away into the wiloland and disappears ; the awestruck children stand looking after him. MANZ and MARTI observe the retreating figure of the fiddler, and each other with varied feelings, not knowing exactly what attitude to take towards each other.)

MARTI :

'Twixt us, methinks, will lie the bidding for that land.

MANZ :

Who else would buy a strip
All hedged in like that
Between your land and mine ?

MARTI :

(With a certain irritation.)

Your furrow runs not straight
Here by the forest edge.

MANZ :

And yours towards the brook
Is twisted all that way.

MARTI :

For my part I'd as soon
Have left things as they were.

(With increasing anger.)

MANZ :

And every time you ploughed
You've filched a little more.

MARTI :

(Starting to his feet.)

Filched ! You say that to me
When you've ta'en perch on perch ?

MANZ :

(Starting angrily to his feet.)

You lie, Marti !
Every ell there is mine !

MARTI :

I tell you, Manz, mark this !

MANZ :

If the lot falls to me
You'll have to pay all.

MARTI :

You churl, you try your worst !
(The children clasp each other in terror.)

MANZ :

You scoundrel, hold your tongue !

MARTI :

I'll have each rood you took.

MANZ :

Rood ! I'll have each inch you stole.

MARTI :

(Striding towards Vrenchen.)

Come here at once !
And play no more with him.

MANZ :

(Striding towards Sali.)

Sali, now mark this :

No more with her you speak.

(Manz and Marti each take their child roughly by the hand and depart in different directions. The children instinctively stretch out their arms towards each other, and just before the curtain closes Manz and Marti stop and turn towards each other with threatening gestures.)

Act I.

SCENE II.

Six Years Later.

Outside Marti's house. Around the house everything has run wild with neglect, several panes of glass are broken and the windows pasted up with paper. SALI enters looking longingly towards the house. VRENCHEN presently comes to the door and sees Sali. Their eyes meet and they regard each other in silence.

VRENCHEN :

(Motionless, with downcast eyes.)

Sali !

SALI :

Vrenchen !

VRENCHEN :

Why did you come ?

(She bursts into tears.)

SALI :

Only to see you again,
I could stand it no more.

VRENCHEN :

Sali !

SALI :

Since last we met
And swore to meet no more.

VRENCHEN :

Meet no more !

SALI :

My thoughts have never left you.
O, let us be friends again !

VRENCHEN :

Aye, friends again !
And our fathers ?

SALI :

We're surely not to blame
For what in hate they've done,
The lawsuit worst of all,
That ruined yours and mine
And drove us from our homes.

VRENCHEN :

With us indeed t'is almost done,
And all our meadows and fields are gone.
Our house is falling in decay,
The horses, cows, have all been sold ;
(*In despair.*)
It will never, never come right again.

SALI :

If we two hold together,
All may yet come right again.
Are you alone Vreli ?
I have so much to say.
O let me stay awhile
And tell you without fear
What's nearest to my heart.

VRENCHEN :

Father's in Seldwyla ;
But here you must not stay,
For he may soon return :
Oh ! never must he find you here.
I shudder when I think
Of what might happen then !
(*Thinking awhile.*)
I go to'rds evening out on the fields :
Will you not wait for me there ?

SALI :

On the wildland ?
(*With sudden impulse they clasp hands again.*)

SALI AND VRENCHEN :

Say, will you ?
(*Sali tries to draw Vrenchen towards him.*)

VRENCHEN :

Now go ! I soon will follow.

(*Sali goes. Vrenchen beckons longingly after him, then turns and goes slowly into the house.*)

SCENE III.

The wildland, overgrown with red poppies in full bloom, surrounded by corn-fields; in the background fields and small villages perched here and there on the hills; snow-mountains in the distance.

SALI lies on his back. Then VRENCHEN enters unperceived. She regards Sali a moment, calls him, and hides herself. Sali looks around in astonishment, discovers Vrenchen, and runs eagerly after her. They clasp each others hands laughingly.

VRENCHEN :

Sali! Sali!

SALI :

Vreli!

Vreli, all my cares have vanished
Like the snow before the sunshine.

VRENCHEN :

Once more life's sunshine
Breaks the heavy clouds
And smiles upon me
With a radiant smile.

(The Black Fiddler steps out from the wildland.)

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

I knew we'd meet again.
A handsonie pair you've made
Tho' things are going ill.
You know me not, perchance,
Tho' on my land you played.
The fiddler, he it is,
Whose land your fathers stole.
It pleases me to see
The havoc they have wrought.
And now we're beggars all,
I bear you no ill-will.
And when you care to come
Into the world with me,
The woods and dales we'll roam,
And your merry guide I'll be.
My guide the sun and moon
Towards the west across the sea;
The waving corn my daily bread
To strange wild music from the stream,
My wine, the red, red poppies.

(He turns to go, but stops and turns once more towards Sali and Vrenchen.)

We'll meet again, no doubt,
Further down the hill.
Farewell, my friends, farewell!
(He goes off into the wildland.)

VRENCHEN :

O Sali, I'm afraid,
How very strange he talks !
Ah, well do I remember,
The last time we saw him
The dreadful strife began,
That ruined yours and mine !

SALI :

Fear not, my Vreli,
The man means us no harm ;
'Twas ever on his land
We used to hide and play
In childhood's happy days,
They seem so long ago.

VRENCHEN :

Our childhood's happy days,
They seem so long ago !
Come, let us play again
Out there upon the wildland,
Amongst the corn and poppies red ;
We'll play together, I will hide,
You will come and find me.

SALI :

Come, let us play again
Out there upon the wildland !
Amongst the corn and poppies red,
We'll play together, you and I all day.

(Vrenchen weaves herself a wreath of poppies.)

I'll heap the flowers on your head,
My fairy queen, I'll crown you !
Vreli, how fair you are.

VRENCHEN :

You never looked my way,
But I knew you well from afar ;
I watched you passing many a time !
(She dons the wreath and laughs merrily.)

SALI :

You witch ! how beautiful you are,
How fairylike !

(VRENCHEN runs away into the cornfields. SALI follows her and brings her slowly back, grasping her hands ; she resists faintly. Their lips meet in a long kiss. Marti appears in the background, spying around in search of Vreli. Marti now perceives Sali and Vrenchen in the cornfield)

MARTI :

Shameless hussy !
Bringing shame on all our heads !
Is't not enough the ruin
They have brought upon us ?
Get thee hence !

(Beside himself with rage, he rushes up to Vreli, seizes her and drags her away.)

With me you come !

SALI :

Let go ! she belongs no more to you !

MARTI :

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

(Sali rushes after Marti and fells him senseless to the earth.)

SALI :

Ha !

(Marti does not stir.)

VRENCHEN :

My god, you have killed him !

(Vrenchen rushes to her father's side and lifts his head on her lap.)

SALI :

(Imploringly and passionately.)

Vreli !

VRENCHEN :

(In despair.)

Sali ! Sali ! oh, what shall we do ?

Act II.

SCENE IV.

Interior of Marti's house ; everything is bare, only a bedstead and a bench are left. Vrenchen sits alone before a small fire. It is almost dark. The door remains open thro' the whole scene, and one looks out into the twilight.

VRENCHEN :

Ah, the night is approaching ;
Ah, the last night in my old home ;
Ah, the fire is dying ;
And now I'm quite alone !

(Enter Sali, looking very disheartened and pale. He watches Vreli silently and unobserved.)

SALI :

Vreli, my own !

VRENCHEN :

(Clasps him round the neck.)

Sali !

SALI :

Oh, how my heart has longed for you !

VRENCHEN :

And mine for you !

(They remain tightly clasped.)

VRENCHEN :

O Sali, I should have died
Had you not come,
What e'er betide, my love o'er leaps
The space that lies between us,
My truest, my own beloved !
And all that now remains on earth
For me, are you alone
And all my longing love for you,

SALI :

O Vreli, I should have died
Had I not come,
My love for you o'erleaps
The space that lies between us,
My dearest, my own beloved,
And all that now remains on earth for me
Is you, and all my longing love for you !

SALI AND VRENCHEN :

Ah, no longer could I live
Apart from you
Aye, e'en death were welcome
Better than my joyless life,
My own true love,
My own true love, my Vrenchen !
And now for me on earth,
My only ties are your sweet self *(Sali, Vreli)*
And your true eyes that gaze on me
So full of longing !

SALI :

Dearest, I'll leave you no more,
So have no fear !

VRENCHEN :

(Disengaging herself.)

I've come from Seldwyla.

SALI :

How pale you look !
I heard it in the village,
You took your father thither !

VRENCHEN :

Yes, he was helpless !

(She bursts into tears)

His mind was gone, poor man
He laughed and sang all the way !
I never saw him so careless and happy before.

SALI :

Poor Vreli ! And all thro' me !

VRENCHEN :

And now I'm quite alone !
To-morrow I must go !
The house and all is sold.

SALI :

What will you do ?
Where will you go ?

VRENCHEN :

Out into the world.

SALI :

Never could I face the world without you,
And where you go I will follow,
Vreli, my own !

(SALI takes VRENCHEN in his arms.)

Nay we will wander together
Into strange lands,
And leave our past behind us,
Vreli, my own !

VRENCHEN :

Oh, if it were possible
To wander free and careless
Like gipsies on the great road,
Onward, ever onward !
Sali, my own !

SALI :

Aye, love, we'll wander together
Thro' the wide world,
Singing joyfully like larks,
Like larks in the springtime,
Vreli, my own !

(VRENCHEN *throws her arms tenderly about SALI and draws him to the bench by the fire.*)

VRENCHEN :

Come, sit down by my side,
Stay with me thro' the night ;
We'll talk of bygone days,
And both await the dawn ;
The parting comes so soon.

(*It is quite dark, the room is now only lighted by the flickering fire.*)

SALI :

From you I'll never part,
But near you I will stay,
With you await the dawn,
And while the time away
My life-long day !

(SALI and VRENCHEN *sink into slumber. It becomes quite dark.*)

THE DREAM OF SALI AND VRENCHEN.

They dream that they are being married in the old church of Seldwyla.
The church bells are ringing in the distance. Chorus in the church.

Lord, before Thy mighty will
A loving couple humbly kneels ;
Upon them let thy blessing fall ;
Keep pure their hearts
And free from sin,
That ever they may glorify thy name. Amen.

(*Bells.*)

Send thy blessing on this pair ;
Glory to God on high !

(*The churchbells ring merrily ; SALI and VRENCHEN are still asleep ; dawn begins to break. SALI awakes and notices VRENCHEN with astonishment. It becomes quite light and the sun shines into the room thro' the open door. VRENCHEN awakes.*)

VRENCHEN :

Ah, 'twas but a dream !
 Oh, Sali, what a beautiful dream !
 Arm in arm we walked to the old church of Seldwyla ;
 'Twas our wedding-day,
 And as we passed along
 The people greeted us.
 You were so grave, so noble,
 I was so happy, ah, so happy !

SALI :

The dream you dreamt, I also dreamt,
 How very strange ! Oh Vreli,
 Our dream shall all come true,
 And life's highest joys shall be ours at last !

(They run to the door.)

VRENCHEN :

Oh, how I long for one long day with you !
 One careless, happy day,
 To wander thro' the woods
 With you the whole day long,
 And dance with you the whole night through.
 Dancing at some Kermess
 Where we're unknown.
 Oh, to be happy only once with you !

SALI (*enthusiastically*) :

Come then, dearest Vreli,
 To Berghald on the stream.
 The great fair of the year
 Will there be held to-day.
 We'll foot our way right joyfully
 Along the stream and thro' the woods,
 And all our woes we'll leave behind us !
 The people now are on their way.

(Peasants jodling in the distance—now nearer.)

PEASANTS :

Dui-di, Dui-di, etc.

VRENCHEN AND SALI :

Listen to their merry song !
 Come along, the sun has risen high !

(Sali takes Vrenchen round the waist and they both run joyfully out into the sunshine.)

Act III.

SCENE V.

The Fair.

To the left an inn, in front of which booths are erected. In the centre a raised dancing platform; to the right merry go-rounds, shooting galleries, and the entrance to a circus. In front on a platform, men, women, and children in tights are playing antics to attract the crowd. The merry-go-rounds and galleries, etc. must so be disposed that many more appear to be behind. Peasants in holiday costume are circulating amongst the booths, standing before the circus, etc. Early in the evening the booths become gradually illuminated.

GINGERBREAD WOMAN :

Come and buy !
Come and try my gingerbreads
And other dainty sweets besides !
Come and try ! Come this way !

WHEEL-OF-FORTUNE WOMAN :

Try your luck !
Come and try your luck with me,
And see where your fortune lies !
Try your luck ! Come this way !
Take your chance !

SHOWMAN :

Come this way !
Only two pence to see my show !
Walk up ! The show will now begin !

MERRY-GO-ROUND MAN :

Take a ride !
Who'll take a merry turn ?
See how the horses prance !
Take a turn ! Round we go !
Now we start !

SHOOTING-GALLERY MAN :

Try your aim !
Take a shot !
Brave marksmen, come this way
And try your aim with me !
(Peasants begin to dance).

PEASANTS :

Ring out, merry bells
Ding dong ! Ring, merry bells, ring out.

GIRLS :

Come, take us round the fair,
Then we will dance with you.
Come boys, come along !

Boys :

Come girls, the booths we'll look round,
Many fine things may be found ;
Then in the dance we will whirl,
Come girls, come along !

(Dancing now begins.)

PEASANTS :

(Surrounding the dancers.)

La, la, la, etc.

(From the inside of the show clapping of hands and shouts of approbation are heard. Some of the dancers go into the show, others into the fair behind. Enter SALI and VRENCHEN neatly but poorly dressed. Vrenchen leans on Sali's arm, and they have the air of being a happy couple.)

VRENCHEN :

O Sali ! look, what beautiful things !

SALI.

Oh, why am I not rich ?
I would buy them all for you.

VRENCHEN :

Just one little keepsake
To mark this joyful day ;
I am so happy, oh Sali,
What life and bustle !
Oh, how I long to dance with you !

(The showman appears again at the entrance of the circus.)

SALI :

And I with you !
But first let us look round the fair.

VRENCHEN :

Oh, joyful day !

GINGERBREAD WOMAN :

Come and buy !
I have hearts of gingerbread !

WHEEL-OF-FORTUNE WOMAN :

Try your luck !
I can tell you when the happy day will be !

CHEAP JEWELLERY WOMAN :

Come and buy !
Buy a ring, sir, for your lady !

SHOWMAN :

Step this way,
The show has now begun !
Walk up ! step this way !

MERRY-GO-ROUND MAN :

Take a ride ! step this way !
Take a turn !

SHOOTING-GALLERY MAN :

Try your aim !
Come, try your aim !
Step this way !
Take a shot !

(Sali and Vrenchen go off into the fair ; the others ply their respective trades.)

PEASANT GIRLS :

Come, take us round the fair, etc.

PEASANT BOYS :

Come girls, the booths, etc.
(The Showman disappears again).

PEASANTS :

La, la, la.

(Some of the peasants go off into the fair, others join the dancers. A man and woman from Seldwyla come out of the inn ; at the same time Sali and Vrenchen approach the booths. The woman recognizes them.)

FIRST WOMAN :

Well, well, gracious me !
If it is not Vreli, Marti,
And Sali Manz from Seldwyla.

FIRST MAN :

Yes, to be sure, indeed it is,
And a handsome couple they make !

VRENCHEN :

Look, Sali, what pretty things,
What lovely bracelets and rings ?

SALI :

If there is only one you like !

SECOND MAN :

No wonder, they're so poorly clad !

FIRST WOMAN :

(Shrugging her shoulders.)

They've plighted their troth, I'll wager,
Though they are beggared, homeless,
And without a friend.

THIRD WOMAN :

He is by far too good for her !

SECOND WOMAN :

Well, 'tis not hard to see,
And I say surely, more's the shame !

SECOND MAN :

I say, the man's in luck
Winning a wench like her.

PEASANTS :

(In the Circus.)

Ha ! ha ! ha !

(Boisterous applause issues from the show.)

VRENCHEN :

Oh, Sali, it fits me quite !

SALI :

This one, too, I declare
This was made for me.

(Sali and Vrenchen now grow conscious of the notice they are attracting, and become uneasy.)

VRENCHEN :

What are they staring at ?

SALI :

May-be they think we're poorly clad
To be at such a fair.

VRENCHEN :

Maybe, they know from whence we come
And who we are.

WHEEL-OF FORTUNE WOMAN :

Come my pretty lovers
 Turn the wheel of fate.
 Come try your luck with me
 And you'll be married within the year.

GINGERBREAD WOMAN :

Come, buy your own sweetheart
 Something nice to eat.

MERRY-GO-ROUND MAN :

Come, try my horses.

PEASANT WOMEN :

La, la, la, etc.

(The peasants go towards the dancing platform, the women singing ; as they pass SALI and VRENCHEN they stare at them. SALI and VRENCHEN become much embarrassed, at which the peasants laugh boisterously. Bravos and loud clapping of hands issue from the show.)

SALI (*impatiently*) :

Come then, Vreli,
 Here we can not stay.

VRENCHEN :

Aye let's go.
 I feel oppressed by all those staring eyes.
 Nay, here I could not dance.

SALI (*brightening*) :

I know another place
 Not very far from here
 Where we'll be quite unknown,
 In the Paradise-garden
 We will dance the night away.

VRENCHEN :

In the Paradise Garden !

PEASANTS :

La, la, la, etc.

SALI :

Come, let us go.

(People begin to stream out of the show and the players in tights again make their appearance.)

SCENE VI.

VAGABONDS :

(In the distance, unseen.)

Dance along, dance along !
 Further must we hie.
 Hey juchey, hey juchey !
 Nowhere may we stay.
 Dance along, dance along !
 Through the woods and dales,
 Ever on, ever on,
 Towards the setting sun.

THE PARADISE GARDEN.

To the right an old dilapidated little country house with a rather high verandah, situated in a beautiful garden run wild. Everything shows traces of bygone beauty. It is now used as an inn. In the background a river flows by, and a barge full of hay is moored to the bank. The garden overlooks a long valley through which the river winds its way. In the distance the snow mountains. The Black Fiddler and the Vagabonds (the Slim Girl, the Wild Girl, the Poor Horn-player, and the Hunchbacked Bass Fiddler) surround him. It is evening; the verandah is lighted by lanterns; soft summer twilight.

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

So you want to know
 How that strife began ?
 The old Trumpeter, 'twas he
 Who owned that piece of land.
 He died and left a bastard son,
 Who to his rights could never come.
 For years that land grew wild ;
 'Twas beautiful to see
 The flowers wild on summer dawns,
 The red red trees on autumn eves.
 Hey, and how the jewels glittered
 In the moonshine on winter nights.
 At last the land was judged
 To be without an heir,
 And put to sale.
 It lay between two farmers rich,
 Who very soon to strife did come.
 They fought it out with deadly hate for years,
 And now no acre they own, ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !
 Their little children, girl and boy,
 Upon the wildland used to play,
 Plucking flowers and poppies red
 Until at last they came to love.
 The children love, the parents hate,
 And nobody knows the end.

(Enter SALI and VRENCHEN, holding each other round the waist ; at first they do not see the vagabonds.)

SALI :

'Tis almost night, the twilight deepens ;
No one will know us here.

VRENCHEN :

I'm happiest like this.
What matter, where we go,
As long as you are near.

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

(Advancing towards Sali and Vrenchen.)

Well, met again !
Good cheer, my friends !
Plainly I see,
That at your wedding,
The fiddler I'll be.
But take my advice,
And wait no longer.
Follow me and my friends
Up to the mountains !
Up there 'tis fresh and free !
Your marriage bed there's soft and purple heather.

(He fills himself a glass with wine.)

Your health ! Well, met again !

(The fiddler fills all the glasses on the table and they drink SALI's and VRENCHEN's health.)

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

Vagabonds are we,
Fetterless and free ;
Owning nothing,
Living nowhere,
Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! etc.
Always roaming,
Fearing no one,
Lawless, merry, free !

VRENCHEN AND SALI :

Are we not also vagabonds,
Homeless, outcasts,
Wanderers on the earth ?
Outcasts, wanderers ?

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

In rain and sunshine,
In hail and snow,
For ever onward we must go.

SALI AND VRENCHEN :

Life with these good people
 Might be kinder
 Than with those we knew ;
 And as long as you are near,
 What matters where we go ?
 On the mountains let us wander
 Hand in hand,
 And see the purple mists arise
 From shadowland.
 Wandering, wandering, wandering !

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

Ne'er thinking of the morrow,
 And taking what we can,
 Thro' life we go a-singing
 Towards the setting sun ;
 Ever wandering, wandering !

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

Come and live with us
 And taste the cream of life ;
 Let others drink the sour milk
 Of toil and strife.

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

THE SLIM GIRL :

(*To Vrenchen.*)

Come with us and live free.
 And when you tire of each other,
 Why, there are others awaiting you.

VRENCHEN :

(*Proudly.*)

That I could never do !

THE WILD GIRL :

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !
 (*Half sneeringly.*)
 I'm afraid our sort of life
 Would never do for you ;
 You're far too respectable.
 Vagabonds are we !
 Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

Vagabonds are we !
 Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

THE WILD GIRL :

(Turning once more to Vrenchen.)

Take my advice and get yourselves married.

THE BLACK FIDDLER :

Think over it awhile;
 And when your mind's made up,
 We'll welcome you in there.

(Pointing to the house he goes slowly into the house, and the vagabonds follow. From within clinking of glasses and laughter is heard.)

SALI :

What say you, Vreli ?
 Shall we follow these good people
 To the mountains ?

VRENCHEN :

What that woman said is true :
 That life is not for us—
 We could never live like they.

SALI :

You are right, Vreli,
 That life is not for us.

VRENCHEN :

I knew you would not go.
(She kisses Sali.)

(Whilst VRENCHEN kisses SALI a beautiful change comes over the Paradise-garden. The rising yellow moon floods the distant valley with a soft and mellow light. It almost seems as if something mysteriously beautiful had touched the garden as if by enchantment.)

FIRST BARGEMAN :

(In the distance, and gradually approaching.)

Halleo! halleo!
 In the woods the wind is sighing
 Halleo! halleo!
 Down the stream our bark is gliding
 Heigh ho, wind, sing low !

VRENCHEN :

Ah yes! Now I understand;
 This is the garden of paradise.
 Listen! The angels are singing.

SECOND BARGEMAN :

(In the still further distance.)

Oh heigho ! Oh heigho !

FIRST BARGEMAN :

(Nearer.)

Homesteads all around us scattered.
Where folks live until they die ;
Our home is ever changing,
Travellers we a-passing by.

SALI :

Nay, 'tis bargemen on the river.

SECOND BARGEMAN :

Ho ! Travellers we a-passing by.

SALI :

Travellers we a-passing by.
Shall we also drift down the river ?

VRENCHEN :

(Instantly grasping his idea.)

And drift away for ever ?
Oh, Sali, how I love you !
I've had that thought this many a day,
But never dared to ask you.

(With conviction.)

We can never be united,
And without you I could not live !
Oh, let me then die with you !

SALI :

Aye, let us die together !
To be happy one short moment,
And then to die,
Were not that eternal joy ?

SALI AND VRENCHEN :

See the moonbeams kiss the woods,
The fields, and all the flowers ;
And the river, softly singing,
Glides along and seems to beckon.
Listen ! Far-off sounds of music
Startle trembling echoes,
Throbbing, swelling, faintly dying
In the sunset's fading glow.
Where the echoes dare to wander,
Shall we two not dare to go ?

SALI :

(Pointing to the boat filled with hay.)

See our wedding bed awaits us !

Come, Vreli, sweet one !

(THE BLACK FIDDLER appears on the verandah of the inn, playing wildly on his fiddle.)

THE FOUR VAGABONDS :

(From within the inn.)

Lol, lol, lol, etc.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

(SALI lifts VRENCHEN into the boat.)

VRENCHEN :

Look, my nosegay goes before me !

(She plucks the nosegay from her bosom and casts it into the river. SALI jumps into the boat and casts loose, he then stoops down and pulls the plug from the bottom of the boat. The boat moves out into the stream ; SALI casts the plug of the boat into the river, and then sinks down upon the hay in VRENCHEN'S arms. The boat drifts slowly down the river and sinks.)

FIRST BARGEMAN :

(In the distance.)

Travellers we a-passing by !

Ho, heigho !

THE END.

